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TCEQ HITS THE ROAD

Open house on oil and gas answers questions from public

A mini-mansion sits squarely in the middle of a goat pasture. A steady stream of pick-up trucks loaded with oilfield equipment rolls down Kenedy's main street. New hotels are under construction. To visitors who haven't been there in a while, the changes in Karnes County can be startling.

The oil boom in the Eagle Ford Shale area developed quickly, leaving many local

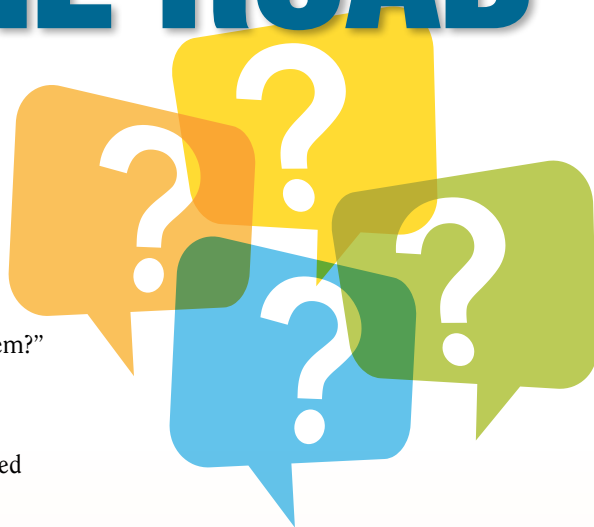
residents with questions for regulators, such as "What is in the air?" or "Is my RV park a public water system?"

TCEQ Prepared for Questions

Experiences in the Barnett Shale honed the ability of TCEQ experts to answer questions that members of the public have about environmental impacts of oil and gas exploration and the rapid growth that comes with it. While the agency prides itself on being responsive, a great deal of effort is also spent in educating local officials, industry representatives, and the public at large on the various regulations and procedures in place to protect the environment and public health. A wide array of information on the environmental aspects of [oil and gas](#) exploration and the TCEQ's role can be found on the agency's website.

Meeting Face-to-Face

But sometimes there is no substitute for face-to-face interaction. At the invitation of [Sen. Judith Zaffirini](#) and Rep. Tim Kleinschmidt, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality and other state agencies staffed an open house to answer questions, pertaining to oil and gas activities, from the public at City Hall in Kenedy on Nov. 13.



The small auditorium was ringed with tables featuring experts, informative materials, and displays on various kinds of air permits, public water systems, responding to emergencies, toxicology, environmental investigations, road projects, and more. Representatives from the Texas Department of Transportation, the Texas Railroad Commission, and the Alamo Area Council of Governments were available as well. Residents are sometimes confused as to who to call about a particular problem. So, the open-house format gave them an easy way to get their questions answered all in one place.



Watch highlights from the open house
youtube.com/user/TCEQNews

Featured Activities

A mock-up of an ambient-air monitoring unit was set up in the parking lot and operators were on hand to explain how the system works. Besides the monitor



TCEQ staffer Avelino "Lino" Garcia (center) and State Sen. Judith Zaffirini speak with an Eagle Ford Shale resident about oil and gas production.

demonstration, participants saw some of the different kinds of equipment used in an environmental air investigation, such as a summa canister and an optical-gas-imaging camera.

Members of the public filtered in over the course of the evening to learn more. Local government officials joined retirees and ranchers. Schoolteachers and local business owners rubbed elbows with members of the regulated oil and gas community. A few of the business owners found out they were a part of the regulated community! Some were just curious whereas others had specific questions. Even children could find something of interest. At the [Take Care of Texas](#) table, they learned about ways they could be better caretakers of the environment while solving fun puzzles and coloring posters.

Help Is Always Available

Events like this one are just one way the TCEQ uses to reach members of the public.

- Information on oil and gas activities and infrastructure, such as regulations, licensing, air monitoring, reporting, and filing complaints, is just a few clicks away on the agency [website](#).



A summa canister like those TCEQ uses to take air samples in environmental investigations.



Cameron Lopez, waste manager for the TCEQ's San Antonio regional office, ready to answer questions about how the state responds to emergencies.

- Staff members in your nearest TCEQ [regional office](#) hold a wealth of information and can direct you to available resources.
- Small businesses and local governments can call a confidential compliance hotline during business hours for assistance: 800-447-2827.
- To file an [environmental complaint](#), file an online form or call the 24-hour hotline: 888-777-3186.

Oh, and if you want some more activity sheets to teach children about the environment in an entertaining way, you can get an [electronic version of a poster](#) with games and activities for free or order them.

Ask the TCEQ Experts

Here are just a few of the more common questions asked of the TCEQ's experts at the open house:

Why are you doing this?

One of the key missions of the agency is to get information to the public on topics such as how we protect them and how they can work with the agency to get their concerns addressed. These open houses provide a great forum for that.

—Brian Christian, director,
Environmental Assistance Division

I want to set up an RV park on my property. Do I need authorization from the TCEQ?

If you own or manage an RV park in Texas, you may be regulated by the TCEQ if you:

- supply water for drinking, hand washing, dish washing, cooking, or bathing
- treat or dispose of wastewater
- dispose of waste
- disturb 1 acre or more of land during construction

For more information, read [RV Parks: Am I Regulated?](#) (TCEQ publication RG-499) (a very popular item at the information table).

—Nathan Weiss, compliance specialist,
Small Business and Local Government
Assistance program

Has the air quality suffered from the increased oil and gas activity in the Eagle Ford Shale?

We've done extensive monitoring in the Eagle Ford Shale area. We've had two contracted aerial surveys, as well as mobile monitoring. We also utilize a lot of hand-held equipment for our air investigations where we send off canisters to the lab in Austin for analysis and to date there really hasn't been any indication of

health concerns associated with air quality in the Eagle Ford Shale.

—Joel Anderson, director,
TCEQ San Antonio Region

How do I file a complaint with the TCEQ?

Start with your [regional office](#) or call the 24-hour hotline: 888-777-3186. For more information, check out [Do You Want to Make an Environmental Complaint?](#) (TCEQ publication GI-278) on collecting evidence and filing a complaint.

—Julie Steger, team leader, Rule Registrations, Air Permits Division

How should I properly manage and recycle scrap tires?

Exercise due diligence and use registered scrap-tire transporters and processing facilities. You can search for [registered tire handlers](#) online or call 512-239-2515.

—Tanveer Anjum, senior technical advisor, Waste Permits Technical Assistance Group

What is “Take Care of Texas” about?

The [Take Care of Texas](#) campaign is about clean air, clean water, and managing waste and it is about public outreach. Some of the most popular publications include the *Water Recycles* poster,

the *How You Can Take Care of Texas* posters and activity sheets, and our informational brochure. This year we have the first-ever art contest for students in grades K-5.

—Lino Garcia, Take Care of Texas 

Information Online



Watch Highlights from the Open House
youtube.com/user/TCEQNews

Oil and Gas Activities
www.tceq.texas.gov/assistance/industry/oil-and-gas/oilgas.html

Sen. Judith Zaffirini: Kenedy Open House
www.zaffirini.senate.state.tx.us/pr14/p111714a.htm

Take Care of Texas
takecareoftexas.org

TCEQ Regional Directory
www.tceq.texas.gov/about/directory/region/reglist.html

File an Environmental Complaint
www.tceq.texas.gov/complaints

TCEQ Publications
www.tceq.texas.gov/cgi-bin/comm_exec/publications.pl

RV Parks: Am I Regulated? (RG-499)
www.tceq.texas.gov/publications/rg/rg-499.html

Do You Want to Make an Environmental Complaint? (GI-278)
www.tceq.texas.gov/publications/gi/gi-278.html

Scrap Tire Database
www5.tceq.state.tx.us/TireQuery/



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